DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 926 CG 014 573

AUTHOR Martin, Joanne; And Others
TITLE Now That I Can Have It I Don't Want It: The Effects of Opportunity on Aspirations.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Association (60th, Honolulu, HI, May 5-9, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; *Employed Women; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Feminism; *Occupational Aspiration; *Occupational Mobility; *Secretaries; Sex Role; Sex Stereotypes; *Social Integration

ABSTRACT

The first step in combatting segregation is the integration of a few members of a disadvantaged group into a more advantaged group. At this stage integration is partial and some individuals are left behind. Previous research on the reactions of those left behind has produced two contradictory patterns, i.e., partial integration increases discontent and raises aspirations, as well as the opposite effect. These two findings were tested using 68 female secretaries, who watched a slide/tape presentation describing an executive and a secretarial position at a fictitious oil company. In the presentation the sex ratio of the executives was manipulated. Subjects responded to an attitude questionnaire, a sex-role ideology scale, and an instrument evaluating their desire for promotion. Results indicated that partial integration of the executive ranks increased secretarial satisfaction with pay, made promotions less desirable, and also had the paradoxical effect of increasing feminist secretaries' satisfaction with the status quo while decreasing their aspirations for upward mobility. (Author/HLM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED190926

NOW THAT I CAN HAVE IT I DON'T WANT IT: THE EFFECTS OF OPPORTUNITY ON ASPIRATIONS

Joanne Martin

Raymond L. Price

Robert J. Bies

Melanie Powers

Graduate School of Business

Stanford University

Revised, April 1980

Paper presented at the meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Honolulu, May 1980. This research was supported, in part, by a Lena Lake Forrest fellowship to the senior author from the Business and Professional Women's Foundation.

CG 014573

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joanne Martin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Now That I Can Have It, I Don't Want It:

The Effects of Opportunity on Aspirations

The first step in fighting segregation is usually the integration of a few members of a disadvantaged group into a more advantaged group. At this stage the integration is partial and some individuals are left behind in the disadvantaged group. In our research we have addressed the question of how those who are left behind react to the fact of partial integration.

Previous research on this question has produced two contradictory patterns of findings. One group of researchers has found that advances, such as partial integration, increase discontent with the status quo and raise aspirations. Another group of researchers has found the opposite effect - increased satisfaction with the status quo and lowered aspirations. The literature supporting each of these points of view is discussed below.

The first, rising aspirations, point of view is often supported with historical data. For example, one representative historian concludes that "successful revolution is the work neither of the destitute nor of the well-satisfied, but of those whose actual situation is improving..." (Stone, 1972, p. 16). More psychologically-oriented versions of this point of view include Davies' (1962) J-curve theory of rising expectations and revolution. This point of view is also congruent with research indicating that those who feel the most deprived are often those who are moderately prosperous, rather than those who have the least of a valued outcome (Runciman, 1966; Stouffer et al., 1949). Much of

the research on racial segregation and inequality is also supportive of the rising aspirations point of view. Crosby's (1976, p. 86) review of this literature concludes that, as blacks moved up the economic and social scales, they became less satisfied, more militant, more alienated from the political system, and more likely to participate in riot and protest activity. Macro-level studies of racial violence have produced similar results, in that cities where racial riots occurred had smaller occupational discrepancies between blacks and whites than control cities (Lieberman & Silverman, 1970).

This evidence in support of the rising aspirations point of view has disturbing implications for those who advocate partial integration because they believe it will alleviate discontent. Paradoxically, the rising aspirations perspective implies that partial integration will exacerbate the discontent it was intended to alleviate.

There is considerable research evidence which supports the alternate point of view, that discontent among the disadvantaged is greatest when the economic inequality between the advantaged and the disadvantaged remains large. For example, people dissatisfied with the amounts of economic inequality between their group and a more advantaged group, such as between blacks and whites or between blue-collar and white-collar occupations, were more likely to vote for political candidates who supported change (Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972). Similar results were found in an experimental study, where blue-collar pay levels were held constant while the magnitude of pay inequality between blue-collar workers and management was manipulated (Martin, in press). Blue-collar workers were more discontent with their pay when the inequality between the two groups was large, rather than small. Partial

integration is a decrease in inequality. These results suggest that, for those disadvantaged people who oppose segregation, partial integration should bring a decrease in discontent.

This second point of view, like the first, has paradoxical implications for the advocate of integration. If partial integration decreases the discontent of the disadvantaged who oppose segregation, it should also make them more satisfied with their own status quo. Thus, paradoxically, partial integration may lower the aspirations of those who remain disadvantaged, making them less desirous of upward mobility.

These two bodies of research, therefore, make contradictory predictions concerning the effects of partial integration on people who remain in a disadvantaged group. According to the first point of view, discontent should be increased and aspirations raised. According to the second, discontent should be decreased and aspirations lowered, among those who oppose segregation.

We tested these alternate hypotheses using a 2 x 2 factorial design. The two independent variables were the level of occupational sex segregation (totally segregated or partially integrated) and sex-role ideology (traditional or feminist). Female secretarial subjects were randomly assigned to segregation level. Sex-role ideology, as measured by the "Attitudes Toward Women in Business" scale (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1973), was used as a blocking variable, splitting subjects into traditional or feminist categories. Dependent variables included measures of discontent and of aspiration levels.

Method

The subjects were 68 female secretarial volunteers from a large insurance company. After responding to an attitude questionnaire which contained, among other items, the sex-role ideology scale, the secretaries watched a slide-and-tape presentation. The presentation described two jobs at a fictitious oil company, "Cal. Oil," an executive job and a secretarial position. In the slides which portrayed occupants of these jobs, the sex ratio of the executives was manipulated. In the segregated condition all the executives were male, while in the partially integrated condition, one of the three executives portrayed was a female. (All slides of the secretaries were female.) After the slide presentation, subjects were given information about the pay levels for secretaries and executives at Cal. Oil. They then answered a questionnaire, which contained the dependent measures of discontent with those secretarial pay levels and measures of aspirations, specifically, desire for promotion out of the secretarial ranks at Cal. Oil.

Results

The data were analyzed using 2 x 2 analyses of variance for each of the dependent variables. Support for the first, rising aspirations, hypothesis would cause a significant main effect for level of segregation, with the partially integrated condition causing greater discontent and increased desire for promotions. Support for the second, lowered aspirations, hypothesis, should produce the reverse, with direction of this effect due primarily to stronger discontent and desire for promotions in the totally segregated condition among

those who are ideologically opposed to sex segregation--the feminists. This specification of the lowered aspirations hypothesis was tested, for each dependent variable, using a planned contrast, with a weight of -3 for the feminists in the totally segregated condition and +1 for the other three groups.

Manipulation Checks

At the conclusion of the study, the subjects were asked to estimate the demographic characteristics (age, sex, etc.) of the executives and secretaries at Cal. Oil. Responses indicated that the manipulation of the sex ratio of the executives was successful, although none of the subjects expressed the suspicion that this was the topic of the study. In the segregated condition, the secretaries estimated that 99.7 percent of the executives were male, as opposed to 74.6 percent in the partially integrated condition.

Discontent

Five different types of pay discontent were measured. For each, discontent was stronger in the totally segregated condition than in the partially integrated condition, as can be seen in Table 1. However, the main effect for level of segregation was significant only for dissatisfaction with comparisons to other secretarial pay levels. For each measure, the difference between these two conditions was due to the stronger discontent of the feminists in the totally segregated condition--discontent which was not present in the partially integrated condition. The planned contrast of the feminists in the totally segregated condition vs. the other three groups was significant for measures

of feeling pay levels to be less than deserved, and the measures of dissatisfaction with comparisons to both other secretarial and to the executive pay levels. The two measures of the perceived injustice of pay showed similar, but non-significant trends. Overall, these results support the second hypothesis, indicating that partial integration alleviated the strong discontent experienced by feminists in the totally sex-segregated context.

Aspirations

Two types of information, concerning aspirations, were collected. The secretarial subjects were asked to estimate both the likelihood and the desirability of promotions out of the secretarial ranks at Cal. Oil. These data are presented in Table 2. As one would expect, both feminists and traditionals agreed that such promotions were significantly more likely in the partially integrated condition. This main effect was significant for estimates of the likelihood of promotion for secretaries in general and for the subjects personally.

Although promotions were more likely in the partially integrated condition, they were seen as less desirable than in the totally segregated condition. This main effect was significant for both the desirability of promotions into managerial positions and into unspecified "non-secretarial" positions. The planned contrasts for both of these measures of the desirability of promotions were significant, indicating that these main effects were primarily due to the changes in the opinions of feminists. Only feminists in the totally segregated condition expressed a strong desire for promotion--these aspirations were

lower in the partially integrated condition, thus supporting the second hypothesis.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that partial integration of the executive ranks increased secretaries' satisfaction with their pay and made promotions out of the secretarial ranks less desirable. This effect was due primarily to changes in the opinions of feminists, who were more strongly discontent with their pay and more desirous of promotions in the totally segregated condition. Partial integration, as predicted by the second, lowered aspirations, hypothesis, had the paradoxical effect of increasing feminist secretaries' satisfaction with the status quo and decreasing their aspirations for upward mobility. Thus, the results of this study concur with the results of other recent research (e.g., Miller, Boyce, and Halligan, 1978) in questioning the validity of the rising expectations explanation of discontent among the disadvantaged.

These results are discouraging to those who advocate partial integration as a first step toward equality. Kanter's (1976) research indicated that token or partial integration has negative effects on the few women who join previously all-male, advantaged groups. This study suggests that partial integration may also have unanticipated and, possibly, deleterious effects on the women who remain in the disadvantaged position, depressing their aspirations for now-possible advancement, almost as if these women are saying, in accord with reactance theory, "Now that I can have it, I don't want it."

There are at least three explanations for this phenomenon. First, women may seriously assess the negative consequences of upward mobility, such as increased responsibility or longer hours, only when such mobility becomes a possibility. Second, women's aspirations may be lowered by partial integration because the secretaries may experience a sense of vicarious achievement through the presence of female executives. Finally, and most pessimistically, there is evidence that occupations become less prestigious when women are admitted, thus suggesting that the presence of female executives lowers the desirability of an executive position. In our future research we will attempt to discover which of these alternatives best explains why partial integration should have the paradoxical effect of increasing contentment with the status quo and lowering aspirations. In addition, we will explore whether these effects of occupational sex segregation may be generalized to other types of segregation, in particular, racial inequality.

References

Crosby, F. A model of egoistic relative deprivation. Psychological Review, 1976, 83, 2, 85-113.

Davies, J. Toward a theory of revolution. American Sociological Review, 1962, 27, 5-18.

Kanter, R. Men and women of the corporation. New York: Basic Books, 1978.

Lieberson, S., & Silverman, A. R. The precipitants and underlying conditions of race riots. In F. I. Megaree & J. F. Hokanson (Eds.), The dynamics of aggression. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Martin, J. Relative deprivation: A theory of distributive injustice for an era of shrinking resources. In B. Staw & L. Cummings (Eds.), Research in organizational behavior, Vol. 3, Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1980.

Miller, A., Bolce, L., & Halligan, M. The J-curve and the black urban riots. American Political Science Review, 1977, 71, 3, 964-982.

Runciman, W. Relative deprivation and social justice. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.

Stone, L. The causes of the English revolution, 1529-1642. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972.

Stouffer,, S., Lumsdaine, A., Lumsdaine, M., William, R., Smith, M., Janis, I., Star, S., & Cottrell, L. The American soldier. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949.

Vanneman, R., & Pettigrew, T. Race and relative deprivation in the urban United States. Race, 1972, 13, 4, 461-486.

Table 1

Mean Level of Discontent as a Function of

Degree of Segregation and Ideology

Measure of Discontent with Pay[b]	Degree of Segregation: Totally Segregated, Traditional	Degree of Segregation: Totally Segregated, Feminist	Degree of Segregation: Partially Integrated, Traditional	Degree of Segregation: Partially Integrated, Feminist	F test for Degree of Segregation	t test for Planned Contrast[a]
Less than deserved	2.89	1.79	2.76	2.95	n.s.	**
In comparison to other secretaries						
Dissatisfaction	3.61	3.00	4.29	4.67	5.20(1,63)*	p<.06.
Perceived injustice	3.94	3.93	4.76	4.79	n.s.	n.s.
In comparison to executives						
Dissatisfaction	2.89	1.50	2.82	3.16	n.s.	***
Perceived injustice	3.11	2.36	3.69	3.16	n.s.	n.s.

[a]Smaller numbers indicate pay is less than deserved, more dissatisfying, and perceived as more unjust.

[b]Weights for the planned contrast were -3 for feminists in the totally segregated condition and +1 for the other three groups.

*p <.05

**p<.01

***p <.001

Table 2

Mean Aspiration Level as a Function of

Degree of Segregation and Ideology

Measure of Level of Aspiration[a]	Degree of Segregation				F test(df)[b] for Degree of Segregation	t test for Planned Contrast[c]
	Totally Segregated		Partially Integrated			
	Traditional	Feminist	Traditional	Feminist		
Likelihood of Promotion						
Secretaries in general	2.44	2.31	4.58	4.44	18.98(1,62)***	n.s.
You personally	2.33	2.36	3.94	4.89	13.92(1,64)***	n.s.
Desirability of promotion						
To non-secretarial job	7.56	8.79	6.53	7.42	5.58(1,63)*	***
To managerial job	5.83	8.61	5.18	6.26	4.71(1,63)*	***

[a]Smaller numbers indicate that promotions are less likely and less desirable.

[b]Differences in degrees of freedom are due to subjects not responding to an item.

[c]Weights for the planned contrast were -3 for feminists in the totally segregated condition and +1 for the other three groups.

*$p \leq .05$

*** $p < .001$